

eNews from Sen. Lisa Murkowski - Vol. 2, Issue 5 : : [Visit Senator Murkowski's Web Site](#)
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Murkowski Co-Sponsors Legislation to Improve Veterans Care in Rural Areas

I have joined 12 other Senators in introducing the Rural Veterans Care Act of 2006. This legislation would establish several new policies within the Department of Veterans' Affairs to raise the level of services provided to veterans living in rural areas. Currently 39 percent of veterans who receive VA benefits in Alaska live in rural areas. The bill would establish an Assistant Secretary for Rural Veterans responsible for implementing pilot programs and research projects to explore the various means of accomplishing this task. [Read More](#)



Senator Murkowski Meets with Alaska Veterans in Washington, D.C.

University of Alaska College Savings Plan Among Nation's Best

For the third straight year, the UA College Savings Plan has been named one of the best college savings plans in the U.S. by analysts at Morningstar, Inc. Legislation that I sponsored as a member of the Alaska Legislature established this program. I encourage parents to learn more about the savings plan by visiting their [website](#). You can join my family in taking advantage of the benefits associated with the plan, and start putting money away for college expenses. In fact, my boys were the first enrollees in the program.

Volunteers Needed for Veterans Wheelchair Games

The Local Organizing Committee (LOC) for the 26th National Veterans Wheelchair Games (NVWG) is recruiting 2,500 volunteer Alaskans to help prepare for events and coordinate logistics for the NVWG, which will take place in Anchorage from July 3-8, 2006. The NVWG is expected to attract more than 500 athletes to compete in 16 Olympic-type sporting competitions. Volunteers will be

needed June 28 to July 9. Applications are now being accepted.

Events will take place at the Egan Center, Sullivan Arena, Bartlett High School, Delaney Park Strip, Cellular One Sports Center, Polar Bowl and other venues. Competitive events include archery, swimming, table tennis, weightlifting, air guns, basketball, softball, quad rugby, bowling, handcycling, wheelchair slalom, power soccer, a motorized wheelchair rally and track and field.

To download a volunteer application or apply on-line, visit [their website](#). To request additional information, send an email to volunteers@alaskadestinations.com or call (907) 276-5550. Additional information on the National Games can be found [here](#).



Murkowski Travels to Ottawa for Meetings on the Arctic

I was in Ottawa this week to attend a meeting of the Conference of Parliamentarians of the Arctic Region, a parliamentary body comprising delegations appointed by the national parliaments of the Arctic states (Canada, Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway, Russia, Sweden, U.S.A.) and the European Parliament. The Conference also includes permanent participants representing Indigenous peoples, as well as observers. The meeting focused on preparation for the upcoming [International Polar Year](#). In addition, I had the opportunity to learn more about the upcoming Inuit Circumpolar Conference which will be held July 9-14 in Barrow.

U.S. Department of Health and Social Services Provides Bird Flu Information

As part of the federal government's efforts to assist Americans in preparing for a possible avian flu outbreak in the United States, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services has prepared a series of checklists for states, local governments, businesses, individuals and families, medical care providers, faith-based organizations and schools. The checklists are available [here](#). This site also provides links to individual states' avian flu preparedness websites.

Alaska Chosen as Finalist for Education Growth Model Pilot Project

I am pleased to announce that Alaska has been chosen as one of the seven states that have made the first cut in the U.S. Department of Education's application process to demonstrate a growth model as part of the state's school accountability system. I have been working with Secretary Spellings on this issue since she took over the U.S. Dept. of Education. I congratulate the staff at Alaska Department of Education and Early Development for its hard work to design a practical, useful and rigorous assessment and accountability system that focuses on ensuring that each child

reaches their highest potential. I look forward to the rest of the process and hope that Secretary Spellings will choose Alaska as one of the final growth model pilot states in late May of 2006.

Murkowski Praises Kensington Mine Decision

I commend the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers decision to reinstate the 404 permit for the Kensington Mine. This is clearly great news for the Southeast Alaska economy. Construction of the Kensington Mine slowed after litigation challenged the Corps' decision to issue the 404 permit for the mine's tailings disposal facility. In response to the lawsuit, the Corps of Engineers suspended Coeur's permit. The Kensington Gold Mine, once in full production, has potential for an annual payroll and benefits of \$16 million and 200 jobs for Juneau and Southeast Alaska.

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